

## Consensus

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Volume 42  
Issue 2 *Living through COVID-19, looking  
beyond COVID-19*

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Article 5

7-25-2021

### COVID-19: The Laurier Library on Demand

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#### Recommended Citation

Ashoughian, Gohar (2021) "COVID-19: The Laurier Library on Demand," *Consensus*: Vol. 42 : Iss. 2 , Article 5.

Available at: <https://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol42/iss2/5>

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## COVID-19: The Laurier Library on Demand

Gohar Ashoughian<sup>1</sup>

**I**n the wake of the 1918 Influenza pandemic the Washington Post posted this note on October 6, 1918:

The Public Library has been closed by order of the commissioners...The library staff will be on duty as usual. When the Library is reopened books in the hands of readers may be returned and no fines will be collected for a period of one week after the reopening. No books will be given out while the library is closed, but readers may return books between the hours of 9 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. at the rear entrance to the central library on Mount Vernon place.<sup>2</sup>

Sound familiar? A century later, we were faced with a similarly devastating reality when the COVID-19 pandemic paralyzed the world. In those faraway years of 1918, 1919 and 1920, the libraries adapted their service models with social distancing and quarantining, shutdowns, and limiting public access to the library buildings and physical collections.<sup>3</sup>

Libraries mobilized again in 2020. All types of libraries concentrated their efforts on assuring online access to their materials and services while maintaining the highest level of user and staff safety. The usage of electronic resources increased significantly in public libraries. These libraries not only found ways to pivot quickly to digital delivery, but rapidly ensured access and timely communication with their patrons, and also performed critical social functions in support of their communities.<sup>4</sup>

According to UNESCO, as posted on their website on March 24, 2020, "Over the past 10 days, the number of students affected by school and university closures in 138 countries has nearly quadrupled to 1.37 billion, representing more than 3 out of 4 children and youth worldwide."<sup>5</sup> It became apparent very quickly that this was going to be an unprecedented disruption for post-secondary education. Universities and colleges were abruptly thrust into this reality, with varying degrees of readiness to transition to online and remote delivery options. However, there was no other alternative option and not much choice, as the deadly virus needed to be contained and its spread halted. As part of this global "*new normal*," Wilfrid Laurier University issued a work-from-home order on March 17, 2020, and had since relocated the majority of the services online, including teaching and learning,

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<sup>1</sup> Gohar Ashoughian is the University Librarian at Wilfrid Laurier University.

<sup>2</sup> "Influenza Closes Library," *Washington Post*, October 6, 1918.

<sup>3</sup> Lorri Mon, "The Fight Against Enzy: US Libraries During the Influenza Epidemic of 1918," *DttP: Documents to the People* 49, no. 1 (April 5, 2021): 12, <https://doi.org/10.5860/dttP.v49i1.7538>

<sup>4</sup> Cailynn Klingbeil, "Canadian Libraries Respond to COVID-19 | Library Journal," *Library Journal*, 2020, <https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=canadian-libraries-respond-to-covid-19&fbclid=IwAR2Ikj5tFFliAutHjyE0tnvziXrnWwGXB5gaXC10eNsR9L8MtxuOghpNAM>

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO, "1.37 Billion Students Now Home as COVID-19 School Closures Expand, Ministers Scale up Multimedia Approaches to Ensure Learning Continuity," accessed June 8, 2021, <https://en.unesco.org/news/137-billion-students-now-home-covid-19-school-closures-expand-ministers-scale-multimedia>

research, Library and student support services, and convocation ceremonies, with the primary focus on ensuring success, safety, and wellbeing of our community. The University's Pandemic Response Group (PRG) established at the outset of the pandemic, transitioned into the Pandemic Recovery Steering Group (PRSG) and operated expediently and efficiently, like a well-oiled machine to ensure operational success for the entire university community.

Academic libraries were disrupted significantly, with every aspect of our operations affected. Even though the Laurier Library supplied a significant part of its services and materials in digital format before the pandemic, we had to quickly organize ourselves to expand our online offerings and to introduce new services. The Library Executive team and the Library Management Group, librarians and staff worked tirelessly to build a strategy for deploying core and essential services. Our foremost priority in early spring 2020 was to guarantee that our students and faculty could complete the winter term, but we also began intensive preparations for the Spring, Summer and Fall 2020 terms. We developed a process for scenario planning considering numerous variables at that time that were guided by the Provincial and University directives. Through the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL)<sup>6</sup> we coordinated and collaborated with partner libraries throughout Ontario and beyond. It is evident that we all went through a similar rigorous thinking process and focused on services that were vital to ensuring the continuation of learning, teaching, and research at our respective universities.<sup>7</sup>

## Shift in Focus: At the Outset of the Pandemic

### Online Learning and Access to Electronic Course Collections

On March 17, 2020, the Laurier Library closed for public access and all in-person services. This meant no access to print collections and borrowing services, interlibrary loans and print document delivery services, computers and other library equipment, and no access to print course reserves. The Laurier Library had started moving away from print course reserves before the pandemic, gradually shifting to primarily electronic course reserves with the Print-on-Demand (POD) project. The POD, a joint venture between the Library, ICT, Teaching and Learning, the Accessible Learning Centre, and Printing Services, seamlessly integrates the university's Webprint print order submission software with the Library's course reserve system ARES to allow students to select readings of their choice from the e-reserve collection, compile them, submit these to Printing Services for printing, and pick up at any of the three university locations in Waterloo, Kitchener or Brantford. The project introduced significant cost savings for Laurier students by making course readings previously sold as print course packs only available in an electronic format at no additional cost, with the option to print if preferred. The Library had to put the POD service on hold due to closures and work-from-home orders. Still, the experience that went

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<sup>6</sup> OCUL, "Ontario University Libraries Respond to Uncertain Times | Ontario Council of University Libraries," accessed June 9, 2021, <https://ocul.on.ca/ontario-university-libraries-respond>

<sup>7</sup> Channarong Intahchomphoo and Michelle Brown, "Canadian University Research Libraries during the Early Days of the COVID-19 Pandemic," *The Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science* 44, no. 1 (May 26, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.5206/cjilsrscsib.v44i1.10910>

into establishing and running this service became an extremely valuable asset as the COVID-19 situation accelerated the process of transitioning to fully online course reserves.

The Copyright and Reserves team quickly prepared to work from home, processing materials for electronic course reserves and supporting online and remote teaching and learning. The team's resourcefulness and perseverance were noteworthy, given the increased demand for electronic course materials and the associated need for copyright clearances, particularly for media resources (audio and video) and images. A comparative snapshot taken in December 2019 and in December 2020 shows a 61% increase in materials made available through e-reserves (785 requests fulfilled in December 2019, and 1267 in December 2020.) The Library worked with the Laurier Teaching and Learning unit to develop a more efficient workflow and processes specifically for requesting, acquiring and processing course materials in digital format for integration with the university's Learning Management System (LMS), MyLearningSpace. Additionally, the University acquired a blanket license to cover the use of copyrighted materials which allows usage of more significant portions of the works (20-25%) for scanning materials for e-reserves and digital interlibrary loans.

### Instruction and Research Assistance

The Laurier Liaison (Subject) Librarians are particularly comfortable working in a digital environment as they are well-versed in online and digital service delivery. The librarians are well-equipped and integrated with the University's Learning Management System (MyLearningSpace). They continued to offer high-quality services from their homes, online, through the course and subject guides, by email, Zoom and Microsoft Teams™. Librarians worked together to exchange best practices and strategies for online instruction and research consultations, and mastering new technologies to ensure not only the quality of the content delivered but also to ensure accessibility. In 2019-2020, most instruction (87%) was conducted in-person, with 4% in blended mode (flipped instruction, videoconferencing) and 9% delivered online; in 2020-2021, all instruction was delivered entirely online. The Laurier Library is a leader in the province of Ontario in the development and deployment of learning objects using H5P technology. Before COVID-19, the Laurier Library team (Joanne Oud, Yasin Dahi and Dillon Moore) partnered with eCampusOntario to create the eCampusOntario H5P Studio.<sup>8</sup> With 39,349 views in 2020-2021, the learning objects and tutorials created utilizing the H5P platform have gained a lot of traction as teaching and learning became more remote and online. The Library continued to offer virtual reference services with Ask Us chat services available 7 days a week, operating from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Monday to Friday and 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

### Expanded Access to Digital Resources

Increasing the Library's access to electronic materials immediately became a top priority. It was critical to ensure that we could quickly compensate for the loss of access to our print and media resources. The Library immediately added many aggregated electronic book collections to its digital arsenal, such as the EBSCO Academic Ebook Collection, which

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<sup>8</sup> eCampusOntario, "Wilfrid Laurier University Partners on ECampusOntario H5P Studio to Help Share, Create Interactive Content | ECampusOntario," accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.ecampusontario.ca/wilfrid-laurier-university-partners-on-ecampusontario-h5p-studio-to-help-share-create-interactive-content>

contributed over 200,000 e-books, and negotiated with ProQuest to use their print to electronic (P to E) conversion service. This service matched the Library's print holdings with e-versions contained in ProQuest's digital archive. To identify titles for acquisition, the data was analyzed based on a variety of factors, including usage and publication date. Because we already owned the print versions, this exercise gave us access to an extra 1,286 e-books at a 50% discount. Additionally, we acquired 36 subject collections from JSTOR with another 1,203 e-books added to our collection with a 30% discount. As part of our efforts to provide the Laurier community with the necessary resources in support of teaching, learning and research, the Laurier Library became a Member of HathiTrust in July of 2020 to participate in the HathiTrust Emergency Temporary Access Service (ETAS) program.<sup>9</sup> This service provides temporary emergency access to 31.66% of electronic versions of print items held in Laurier's print collection (over 300,000 titles), digitized by HathiTrust. This is in addition to the 4.4 million public domain items that were already accessible through HathiTrust. We have also temporarily suspended the portions of our Collections Policy related to textbooks to enable e-textbook acquisition in support of remote teaching and learning where possible. This is particularly challenging as commercial publishers, who have built their businesses models around selling to students directly, refuse to sell e-textbooks to libraries. As reported by the University of Guelph Library, "Approximately 85% of existing course textbooks are simply unavailable to libraries in any other format than print."<sup>10</sup>

The Library also invested in critical streaming video collections like ACF: Audio Ciné Films and single streaming film titles from Kanopy, in addition to existing streaming platforms and databases like Criterion-on-Demand and Docuseek. Significant work has been done by Charlotte Innerd, Laurier's Head of Collection Development and Acquisitions, to provide access to streaming video, as well as making media resources accessible with captioning and described video capabilities. The accessibility of media resources is an area that the Laurier Library will continue to pursue, irrespective of COVID-19, with Charlotte leading the efforts with OCUL's Audio Visual Community.

### Shift in Focus: Further down the Road

Preparations continued in earnest in the spring and summer of 2020 to introduce more core and essential services for our users in anticipation of the fall term. The Library went through a rigorous scenario planning process with an all-hands-on-deck effort and in partnership with key university stakeholders. The mobilization was truly unprecedented and the support we have received from our university partners was vital and invaluable. We continued providing core services introduced at the outset of the pandemic, but it became imperative to ensure access to our print collections, to the Archives and Special Collections, to enable scanning and digitization from the Library's print resources to further support remote and online learning, and to provide access to study spaces in anticipation of having students on campus. The initial phase of the process was to identify

<sup>9</sup> "Emergency Temporary Access Service | [www.hathitrust.org](http://www.hathitrust.org) | HathiTrust Digital Library," accessed June 10, 2021, <https://www.hathitrust.org/ETAS-Description>

<sup>10</sup> University of Guelph, "Commercial Textbooks Present Challenges in a Virtual Environment | Library," accessed June 11, 2021, <https://www.lib.uoguelph.ca/news/commercial-textbooks-present-challenges-virtual-environment>



more essential services, develop an overall deployment plan, and design the services down to the tiniest detail, all while keeping the wellness and safety of our users and staff in mind. To ensure contactless operations and physical distancing, it was also critical to design a rigorous staffing and scheduling plan for the essential staff returning to work onsite. For each additional service we planned to introduce, we had to apply and receive approval from the PRSG, which itself went through a robust review process involving Facilities and Asset Management (FAM), Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Safety, Health, Environment and Risk Management (SHERM), and Human Resources. By July and August of 2020, we had 20 staff members approved to work on campus (including members of the Library Executive team and the Department Head, Copyright and Resource Delivery Services). We started onsite services with 15 staff members. Others worked from home and came to the Library as necessary.

### Print Book Borrowing and the Bookmobile: Books to Go Service<sup>11</sup>

In spring and summer of 2020, all public and academic libraries locally and provincially started preparing for curbside pick-up and delivery of physical materials in their collections. How can a library provide a curbside pick-up if this is physically impossible due to the architectural setup of the building? The Laurier Library building in Waterloo does not have a convenient curbside. Additionally, we needed to focus the main processing centre in one location to ensure that all health and safety protocols could be followed. At the same time, we needed to guarantee equitable access to resources for all Laurier campuses in Waterloo, Kitchener and Brantford. We required a solution that would meet all our parameters, as in-house circulation was not an option. As always, a good challenge provides fertile ground for creativity. The idea of our Bookmobile delivery was born.

The Bookmobile was intended to drive to central accessible parking spots on all three campuses and distribute items that would be pre-processed, checked out to users in the Library's Alma system, and packaged into paper bags with all the necessary user information attached in advance for easy pick-up. The FAM and the Distribution Services responded rapidly to our request for support with a van they speedily equipped with shelves based on our specifications. Distribution Services provided us with a driver who drove the



Figure 1 - Eveline Escoto, the Bookmobile (Books To Go) driver getting ready to start the first BTG service on Waterloo campus on July 23, 2020. Photo credit: Darin White.

<sup>11</sup> "New Books to Go Service Provides Safe Access to Laurier Library Print and Physical Collections during COVID-19 | Wilfrid Laurier University," accessed June 9, 2021, <https://www.wlu.ca/news/spotlights/2020/july/new-books-to-go-service-provides-safe-access-to-laurier-library-print-and-physical-collections-during-covid-19.html>

Bookmobile and was trained to distribute the materials. This was a mutually beneficial approach as it allowed the staff from the Distribution Services with limited work on campus due to closures to be redeployed to an essential service.

The Bookmobile hit the road on July 23, 2020, starting a journey for Laurier Library's new *Books To Go* service, an old tried and tested method of providing access to library collections, incarnated into an inventive solution to overcome the limitations brought forward by the pandemic. Later in September of 2020, we purchased 2020 Nissan, NV 255 Cargo S V6 High Roof van, and negotiated a Service Level Agreement with the Distribution Services for the continued provision of driver services. The Bookmobile approach proved to be successful as it moved the collection circulation activities completely outside of the Library buildings in Waterloo and in Kitchener, thus minimizing the need for close proximity during material pick up, and also ensured complete separation of the traffic for book circulation and the student access flow for the study spaces in the Waterloo library building. For the Brantford distribution, we worked with our long-time partner, the Brantford Public Library (BPL). The Bookmobile delivered materials to the BPL and these were circulated to users in Brantford using BPL's curbside distribution protocols. A snapshot taken between July 23, 2020 and April 26, 2021 shows 4,970 items circulated. An incredible amount of hard, detailed and meticulous work went into the overall implementation of the *Books To Go* service and special gratitude and acknowledgement are due to Scott Gillies, Associate University Librarian and Vera Fesnak, now retired Head of Copyright and Resource Delivery Services for making this service a reality. The Bookmobile was truly a community affair for the Library. The entire staff was eagerly engaged in naming the service and developing a concept for the logo, with the initial conceptual design developed and presented by Darin White and Lauren Bourdages. These are the moments that are going to transcend time as they brought all of us together in these very trying COVID-19 times.

In November 2020, the Laurier Library worked with colleagues at the University of Waterloo and the University of Guelph to reinstate resource sharing between our institutions, and to allow students, faculty, and staff to borrow books and other physical resources from the libraries and the Tri-University Group of Libraries (TUG) Annex.

### Scan on Demand

The Library launched the new *Scan on Demand* service on October 20, 2020. The service started with a pilot providing access initially to faculty and graduate students. Later, led by Vera Fesnak and Gordon Bertrand, Associate University Librarian, the service expanded and was made available to the entire university community. The *Scan on Demand* service provides users with the ability to request digital scans from books or journals from the Library's print collection. It is fully integrated with the Library's Alma (Omni) search and discovery interface and is designed to provide seamless requesting of scans from books or journal articles with direct delivery to the user. Scans are done within the parameters of Laurier's blanket copyright licensing agreement or the University's Fair Dealing Guidelines when the works requested for scanning fall outside of the agreement or other licensing thresholds. The Library staff manages and coordinates all the necessary copyright-related work, reviews the scanned files for quality control, and ensures AODA compliance as they work on scanning and delivering the requests.

### Mail on Demand

With print collections still held hostage in the locked buildings, and many students and faculty being at a distance from Waterloo, Brantford, and Kitchener, it was vital for us to expand our reach to provide them with the necessary physical materials. Libraries have traditionally made resources available to remote learners, and there is a wealth of library literature available to establish standards and techniques for all areas of the library distance learning support, including mailing and distribution of library holdings to remote learners. Over time as “online” and “digital” became more mainstream in universities, we focused more on providing electronic resources and streaming media in support of online and distance learning, as the availability of electronic resources made it easier to provide access to geographically dispersed users. However, even today, high-quality Internet connectivity is not uniformly available in all parts of our vast country, and some materials are still only available in print, so the provision of print resources to remote users is still needed.

The *Mail on Demand* service was launched on January 25, 2021, and was initially made available to all faculty, students, and staff across Canada. The service allows Laurier users to request books and other circulating materials using the Library's Alma (Omni) search and discovery tool, from collections in Waterloo, Kitchener and Brantford, the TUG Annex remote storage, as well as from the University of Waterloo and the University of Guelph libraries as part of the first group of OCU libraries, early adopters of Ex Libris' Alma (Omni) Automated Fulfillment Network (AFN.) The requests are mailed directly to the users' postal addresses by the library staff using existing delivery mechanisms, and with no charge to the user for the delivery and return.

### Study Spaces

One of the services prioritized by the University and by the Library to be deployed as lockdown measures eased, was the provision of study spaces on all Laurier campuses. The Library Master Space Plan report released in 2014, established that 50% of the study spaces on the Waterloo campus are located in the Library.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, it was important to make sure that we could safely provide access to study spaces following all the necessary health and safety protocols to ensure the wellbeing of both students and staff. The methodology we used to determine the number of study spaces we could deploy on the main (second) floor of the Library, was based on physical distancing requirements (two meters/six feet) and the number of spaces available. The Library worked very closely with FAM to design the space to accommodate student traffic and staff safety with strict health and safety protocols in place, and “Fort Plexi,” lovingly named by the staff, was built. This is a plexiglass enclosure that allows staff to operate completely in a contactless mode, from behind the wall equipped with sound amplifiers. The service was provided based on registration and each study space was assigned to a student upon arrival.

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<sup>12</sup> Library Master Space Plan Advisory Group, “Library Master Space Plan” (Waterloo, ON, 2014), <https://library.wlu.ca/sites/shared-content/master-space-plan/library-msp-report.pdf>





*Figure 2 - Library's 'Fort Plexi', a Plexiglass wall to ensure contact-free operations for the provision of access to study spaces in the Library of Waterloo campus. Photo credit: Gohar Ashoughian.*

### Archives and Special Collections

The Archives and Special Collections provided online reference and scan on demand services to support faculty and graduate students requiring access to archival material for their research. Later, when the restrictions were eased, we were able to provide access to archival and special collections on-site by appointment only. Cindy Preece, the Archives Administrator continued to ensure that we maintain active connections and relationships with our donors. Despite the COVID-19 closure, we initiated several conversations with potential donors to start new relationships as soon as physical donations become possible again.

### Laurier Library as Part of the Kitchener-Waterloo Community

The Laurier Library's vision states: "The Library is the intellectual and cultural heart of Laurier. It is the place where the university community comes together to access and interact with information and people, generate new ideas, and engage with the great questions of our time." It is a vision for an intellectual and cultural hub for the University, with an expanded notion of Commons - Learning, Research and Culture Commons. The Library is a home for the award-winning Wilfrid Laurier University Press, the Robert Langen Art Gallery, and the Laurier Library MakerSpace, also offering active cultural programming. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted not only the core library services, but also all our creative operations. However, this did not deter activities of any of these cultural units within the Library organization, as they pivoted expediently to a virtual delivery model.

Right at the outset of the pandemic, after closing the Library building, the Laurier Library MakerSpace collaborated with InkSmith, a local technology company founded by a Laurier alumnus to be part of the "Canadian Shield" program, one of the largest medical

mask and face shield manufacturers in the country.<sup>13</sup> Darin White who coordinates the activities of the Library MakerSpace moved the 3D printers to his home, and operating these upwards of 16 hours per day, by the end of May 2020 printed more than 500 purple and yellow headbands for the face shields so needed at that time to protect our front-line workers. The MakerSpace continued to bring students together and engage them in making through Zoom sessions as part of the Virtual Maker Mondays. The Laurier Library MakerSpace Online Facebook group was created, becoming very popular in a very short time, with sharing that happens in more than one creative way. Many new online workshops, like video editing, were developed and delivered online with a wider reach to support the Laurier community during the pandemic.

Bringing together the artistic talents of so many people in the Waterloo Region's arts community the Laurier Library produced the "Love in the Time of Covid," in the words of Isabel Cisterna, the artistic director of the video, a "love letter" and video tribute to all artists in the region, whose creative work was so impacted by the closures of numerous venues and festivals.<sup>14</sup>

It is a tradition every May for the Robert Langen Art Gallery (RLAG) to gather the Laurier community and the community at large for a hearty meal of gourmet soup, filling beautiful bowls created by the Waterloo Potters' Workshop to raise funds for the Food Bank of Waterloo Region. The annual Empty Bowls event, led by Suzanne Luke, the Curator of RLAG, is usually held in person at the Laurier Library on Laurier's Waterloo campus. In anticipation of a flavour parade created by the Laurier Food Services, the Wilfrid Laurier University Students' Union and Veritas Café, people line up to choose their bowls nicely arranged in the Gallery.<sup>15</sup> There is an incredible spirit in these in-person events, with lively conversations, live music and friends breaking bread together, and we typically draw 125 people and raise about \$5,000 annually. Like many other events and services, Empty Bowls pivoted online. Of course, it wasn't the same without friends around the table and the aroma of delicious food, but the virtual event did have the advantage of reaching a wider audience. Laurier's Empty Bowls fundraiser event, which took place online on May 19, 2020, raised \$10,547 for the Food Bank of Waterloo Region, more than double the amount raised in a typical year and delivering 31,641 meals to those in need.<sup>16</sup> The event on June 3, 2021 raised \$7,677 which will provide 23,030 meals for families in the Waterloo Region.

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<sup>13</sup> "Laurier Library MakerSpace Part of Waterloo Region Maker Community Printing 3-D Parts for Community Shield Face Shield | Wilfrid Laurier University," accessed June 14, 2021, <https://www.wlu.ca/news/spotlights/2020/may/laurier-library-makerspace-part-of-waterloo-region-maker-community-printing-3-d-parts-for-community-shield-face-shield.html>

<sup>14</sup> "Laurier Library Producing 'Love in the Time of COVID' Video Featuring the Work of Waterloo Region Artists | Wilfrid Laurier University," accessed June 14, 2021, <https://www.wlu.ca/news/news-releases/2020/nov/laurier-library-producing-love-in-the-time-of-covid-video-featuring-the-work-of-waterloo-region-artists.html>

<sup>15</sup> "Empty Bowls, Wilfrid Laurier University - YouTube," accessed June 14, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fiM6V1snlc>

<sup>16</sup> "Laurier's Virtual Empty Bowls Fundraiser Doubles Donations to Food Bank of Waterloo Region | Wilfrid Laurier University," accessed June 14, 2021, <https://www.wlu.ca/news/spotlights/2020/may/lauriers-virtual-empty-bowls-fundraiser-doubles-donations-to-food-bank-of-waterloo-region.html>

## It Is All About People

The COVID-19 pandemic came as a combination of so many things bundled together. It brought forward a massive disruption to almost every aspect of our lives – of what we knew to be “normal.” It affected families in so many ways. Many people lost their loved ones and their livelihoods. The parents juggled between their work-from-home and home-schooling of their children. Many struggled with the pain of not being able to support their elderly parents in long-term care facilities. We lost a beloved colleague, Julia Hendry, our Head of Archives and Special Collections, and were not able to attend her funeral. There are students at the universities and colleges in their second year of studies who haven’t taken a course in a physical classroom yet, and haven’t enjoyed the lively hustle and bustle of student life, with friends and classmates celebrating the transition to adulthood. The pandemic touched us all, in one way or the other. To say that it has been overwhelming would be an understatement, but at the same time, it is heartening to see how we managed to stay resilient together and to be successful, with empathy guiding all of us. I am deeply impressed with the calibre of people we have here at the Laurier Library, with each and every person so dedicated and supportive of each other and our community.

For the Library Executive team, the care for the well-being of our staff and users became paramount. When the University issued a work from home order on March 17, 2020, most of our staff started working from home, but very soon we had a core team of library staff returning to work on-site to deliver essential services. Staying connected and making sure everyone is informed was vital. We started our “Early Lunch With LibExec” town hall meetings to ensure that we could all come together as a whole in a very direct and inclusive way, and engage with each other. This provided a forum and opportunity for every staff member to connect directly with the Library Executive team, to ask questions and raise issues to help us plan and make adjustments to services as we operated with a high degree of uncertainty. As several staff members were approved to come on-site, Jennifer Knechtel, the Library’s Senior Administrative Officer, with meticulous care ensured that everyone was provided with everything they needed to be safe and successful. In a time where technology is taking centre stage, ultimately it is the human factor that has been and will always be the most important one.

## Acknowledgements

Wilfrid Laurier University and its campuses are located on the Haldimand tract, traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishnaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. We recognize, honour, and respect these nations as the traditional stewards of the lands and water on which Laurier is now present.

The author would like to thank Scott Gillies, Gordon Bertrand, Jennifer Knechtel, Joanne Oud, Darin White, and Lauren Bourdages for their support as I was writing this article. I would also like to thank the Wilfrid Laurier University partners who helped us tremendously as we planned and delivered the Library services during the COVID-19 pandemic: Pandemic Recovery Steering Group (PRSG); Facilities and Asset Management (FAM); Distribution Services; Safety, Health, Environment and Risk Management (SHERM); Information, Communications and Technology (ICT); Human Resources and the Office of Provost and Vice President: Academic.

But most importantly my heartfelt gratitude goes to the entire Laurier Library family: the Library Executive team, the Library Management Group, all the department heads and managers, all the librarians and staff, and to all of our Library front-line workers for providing services on-site: Vera Fesnak, Scott James, Lauren Bourdages; Melanie Ross; Hannah Johnson; Robert Noecker, Elzbieta Kucharska; Roberta Ellington, Dawn Matthew, Amy Menary, Julie Schnurr, Michele McHugh, Richard Boyd, Janell McGill, Cindy Preece, Andre Furlong, Christina Kerr, and Eveline Escoto.